

SAFETY ON THE LINE

A service of the NASA KSC Safety and Mission Assurance Directorate

September 2006

"It isn't the mountain ahead that wears you out -


it's the grain of sand in your shoe." Robert Service

An employee, thinking he was picking up a piece of F.O.D. on the ground, actually picked up a bat. The bat bit him and then flew away. As a result, the employee had to receive vaccination shots against rabies.

The risk of contracting rabies is very low. However, rabies is such a serious illness that it is important for KSC employees to understand the hazard of rabies and what they can do to protect themselves from being bitten.

What is rabies and how do people get it?

Rabies is an infectious viral disease that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. People get rabies from the bite of an animal with rabies (a rabid animal). Any wild mammal, like a raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote, or bat, can have rabies and transmit it to people. It is also possible, but quite rare, that people may get rabies if infectious material from a rabid animal, such as saliva, gets directly into their eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound.



Most of the recent human rabies cases in the United States have been caused by rabies virus from bats. Awareness of the facts about bats and rabies can help people protect themselves, their families, and their pets.



Any bat that is active by day, is found in a place where bats are not usually seen, or is unable to fly, is far more likely than others to be rabid. Such bats are often the most easily approached. Therefore, it is best never to handle any bat.

Bats are a valuable asset to the ecosystem. Among other benefits, bats are a major predator of night-flying insects that can cause disease and destroy crops; and they play a vital part in seed dispersal and pollination activities in some parts of the world. People cannot get rabies just from seeing a bat or from having contact with bat guano (feces), blood, or urine, or from touching a bat on its fur (even though bats should never be handled!).

Anyone seeing any dead animals (not just bats), or any animal that appears injured or acting strangely, should immediately contact KSC Pest Management through the SGS Trouble Desk at 853-5211. Pest Management employees have the training and equipment to safely collect animals.

For more information on rabies, go to the Centers for Disease Control website at :

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/bats_&_rabies/bats&.htm



Do you have questions, comments, or an article you would like to submit? Contact Marguerite Davis at 867-8520 , fax number 867-1120, mail code SA-E2 or e-mail them at "Safety on the Line" found in your global address list. Safety on the Line is also on the Web at <http://sotl.ksc.nasa.gov>.